

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church  
Pilot Point  
Alaska ~~LAKE AND PENINSULA~~

HABS No. AK -76

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
ST. NICHOLAS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HABS No. AK-76

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Location: <sup>LAKE AND PENINSULA</sup> Pilot Point, Ugashik Bay, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of historic Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. Pilot Point's simple wood-framed church has a gable roof that turns to hipped over the sanctuary end. Both nave and sanctuary are included in the rectangular plan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1912.
2. Original plans and construction: The church was constructed in a rectangular-plan, gable-roofed form, with a hipped roof covering the sanctuary, perhaps a reference to polygonal sanctuaries.
3. Alterations and additions: None known.

B. Previous Churches on the Site:

In 1904 the church identified "right bank, Ugashik River, Pilot Station" as the site of church property, indicating that there was a church there at that time. (Alaskan Russian Church Archives, reel 214.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The main block includes the nave and sanctuary, the latter covered by a hipped roof.
2. Condition of fabric: fair.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building measures 15'-4" x 35'-8", with an 8'-4" x 7'-4" vestibule on the west front.
2. Foundations: wood post.
3. Walls: The walls are clad with beveled siding, painted cream with aqua trim. The gable is clad with wood shingles.
4. Structural system: wood frame.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There is a single door of five horizontal panels.
  - b. Windows: The windows have six-over-six-light sash.
6. Roof: The gable roof, hipped on the sanctuary end, was recently re-covered with asphalt shingles. The three crosses that adorned the ridgeline were removed during this process.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is an open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. There is a vestibule on the west end.
2. Stairways: There is a one-step amvon, with a semi-octagonal projection in the center and krilos on the sides.
3. Flooring: The flooring is tongue-and-groove boards, mostly covered with carpets.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior is finished with flush boards, painted cream with aqua trim.
5. Doorway: There is one five-panel door between the vestibule and the nave.
6. Decorative features: The iconostas is finished with flush boards. Pairs of colonettes with capitals at the top and bottom frame each doorway. The royal doors are of pierced tin, and the deacons doors are of cotton stretched on a frame and feature geometric ornament.

There is a square recess in the nave ceiling, abutting the iconostas. There is an unusual cornice with carved geometric designs in the sanctuary. In the nave, there are hand-carved lampadas (hanging candle holders) and two candle stands.

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D. Site:

The church sits on top of a windswept hill at the edge of town, overlooking the cannery on the shore below. The church faces west, with the altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches. Graves are located around the church.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Alaskan Russian Church Archives, reel 214, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Kramer, Bobby Jo, village council president and church member, interviewed by author June 1, 1990.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.